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OUR NATIONAL BEGINNINGS

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HON. J. HAMPTON MOORE

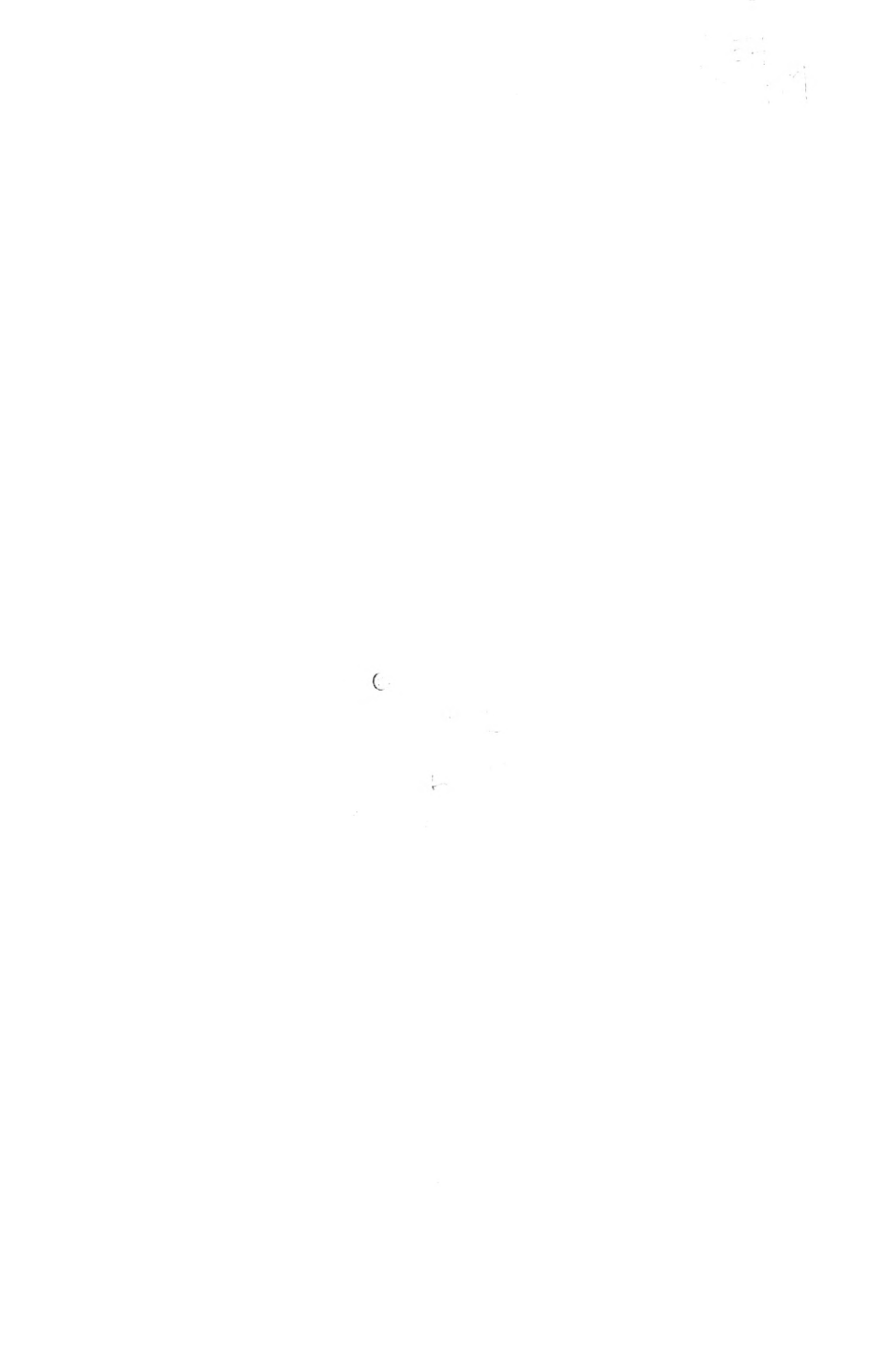
Member of Congress, Third District, Pennsylvania

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INDEPENDENCE HALL

PHILADELPHIA

Monday, July 5, 1909



OUR NATIONAL BEGINNINGS

ADDRESS OF J. HAMPTON MOORE

Member Congress, Third District, Pennsylvania

AT

INDEPENDENCE HALL

Philadelphia, July, 5, 1909

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :

One of the pleasing incidents toward the close of the Constitutional Convention, which met in Independence Hall in 1787, was a statement by Dr. Franklin, who, while the members of the convention were signing the Constitution, called attention to a painting behind the chair of Washington, which represented a bursting sun. Painters had found it difficult, he said, to distinguish between a rising and a setting sun, and he had thought frequently during the four months of debate that there was grave doubt whether the painting, allegorically applied to our country, represented a rising or a setting sun, but now that the convention had put aside its differences and had come to an agreement resulting in a Constitution for the United States, he knew it was not a setting but a rising sun.

There is, therefore, more than usual significance in the presence here to-day as the orator of this occasion, of the Ambassador from the great Empire of Japan, which, in that country, is called, "Nippon," "The Land of the Rising Sun." It is a pleasure to greet His Excellency, Baron Takahira, upon this, the central day and the occasion of American patriotism. In many respects the marvelous development of his country, the commercial importance of which was first made known to us by Commodore Perry, and which brought to us the silk industry through the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia, in 1876, has been coincident with our own.

As we exchange fraternal greetings on this day so dear to the American heart, we cannot turn the initial pages of history without at once observing the great disparity in age between the United States and Japan. The land of the Mikado is one of the oldest while we are the youngest of all the great nations, and the difficulties and perils through which we have passed are doubtless old, familiar stories to our elders of European and Asiatic countries. But what we are in the way of substantial government and of wealth in consequence of that government, proceeds directly from this old Hall in which the American spirit first determined to free itself from British domination, and in which our forefathers of the Constitutional period framed the immortal document that made it possible for us to grow and prosper as a union of states.

It was no mean city in which the Declaration of Independence was written and proclaimed, and in which the Constitution was framed. We were strong socially, commercially and financially. No city in all the colonies held greater prestige than did Philadelphia, and though there be some who criticise it, it is yet to be said, after the lapse of a century and a quarter, that it has maintained itself upon safe and conservative lines and that its people in the main have been prosperous and happy. In no city of this Union is there so much of historic interest.

We have the beginnings of most of those things which have made the nation great. Every one of the great statesmen of the Revolutionary period was in some way or other identified with this goodly city, and the memorials of them and their work are still here to be revered by the lovers of their country. In every great movement in the country's progress we have played a conspicuous and a helping part. In the War of the Revolution, in the War of 1812, in the Mexican War, and in the Great Civil War, Philadelphia, with men and money, did its full part.

In this old Hall, with its Liberty Bell, now the treasured heritage of the Nation, the delegates to the Continental Congress sat, and from it they first proclaimed the Declaration of Independence. Here, too, the delegates to the Constitutional Convention held those long and earnest discussions, which ultimately gave to the separate states a new and lasting bond of union. Within a rifle-shot of this spot Jefferson drafted the Declaration, Morris financed the Revolution, and Washington resided as the Nation's first President. Within that distance is old Christ Church, where the Continental forefathers worshipped and where many of the signers of the Declaration are buried. Around the corner, at Fourth and Arch

Streets, is the last resting place of Benjamin Franklin, and one block nearer is the scene of his experiments with the lightning. Nearby is the house in which Betsy Ross is believed to have first made the Stars and Stripes.

In front of this platform is a monument to John Barry, the first Commodore of the American Navy. His bones lie interred in old St. Mary's Churchyard, on Fourth Street, above Spruce. At old St. Peter's a few steps beyond, lies Stephen Decatur, the intrepid veteran of the Mediterranean. "My country," said he, "may she ever be right, but, right or wrong, my country."

From the river bank yonder, John Paul Jones sailed out to fame and glory under the first American flag. It was there, full nigh a century before, that William Penn had landed to establish this city of Brotherly Love. Here he wrought; here all our illustrious progenitors labored, until liberty and peace were assured the people. Over on Walnut Street, within the sound of my voice, John Marshall, the great interpreter of the Constitution, died, July 6, 1835. Then, it is related, the Liberty Bell tolled for the last time. It cracked sounding his knell, and its tuneful life went out with that of the great Chief Justice.

Philadelphia indeed has come to be known as the representative city of homes--the city of good-citizenship, of peace-loving, domesticated people. The test of the quality of its people rests upon its home-life. It has more than 300,000 separate and detached dwellings. What city can boast of such comfort and convenience to so great a proportion of its people! It was the birthplace of the building association, which now encompasses in its beneficent operations, more than 2,000,000 of wage-earners of the United States. It has 650 building societies of its own, with 170,000 members, who are paying for their homes through this system of thrift.

Where in the whole country are there savings funds like unto those in the city of Philadelphia? Show me the man or the woman who is keeping within his or her income—even though it be the lowliest wage—and is still laying aside a modicum for the rainy day, and I will show you that type of citizenship which well assures the permanency of the nation. In one savings fund society alone in this city there are 200,000 depositors, whose total deposits aggregate the enormous sum of \$90,000,000. Only 21,000 of those 200,000 deposits amount to \$1,000 or over. In another company \$25,000,000 of deposits represent 54,000 accounts. Ask the secret of Philadelphia's conservatism, and we point to the savings funds, and trust companies, and banks, for the answer. The people prosper here:

they save here. The policeman does not have to stand by to keep the savings fund depositor within the law.

Proud as we are of our city and of all that has gone forth from it, we must own to our own weaknesses and amoniances. No country in the world has been free from them. All great cities the world over are suffering from them to-day. The wonderful awakening of the Empire of the Mikado after centuries of strife and dissension, did not take place until half a century ago. All that our enterprise and energy would accomplish may not be secured at once. The Declaration of Independence did not bring on immediate freedom. It took full seven years to end the Revolution. Men differed upon public questions in 1776 and 1787 much as they do to-day. Every representative of the colonies in the Congress that adopted the Declaration and in the convention that framed the Constitution, had previously been a subject of the King. There were nearly 4,000,000 of people to be harmonized when the Articles of Confederation failed. Large states and small states were utterly at variance. Indeed, if we are to trespass into the secrecy of the proceedings of the Constitutional Convention, we will find the aristocrat fighting with the representative of the plain people; the delegate suspected of Tory inclinations struggling with the representative who doubted his sincerity. We are told by one of the delegates to that convention that there were times during the discussions when it seemed that the union of the states was being sustained but by the strength of a single hair. What were they discussing then? The rights of the states; the rights of individuals; the rights of property; the right to hold office; the right to appoint men to office; the right of one state over another state; the right of one state to tax commodities that came from another state. Oh, there were hundreds of questions over which the patriots of 1787 wrangled and fought as in a death struggle.

From that convention two delegates that had been sent from the great state of New York withdrew before adjournment, reporting to their Governor that the cause of states' rights was hopeless. Out of that convention before adjournment, went Luther Martin of Maryland to report to his Legislature that the lives and liberties of the common people were being throttled and that he, for one, would be willing to sacrifice his every personal possession if the country could be induced "to reject those chains which are forged for it." Back to Virginia too, went Edmund Randolph to report to his Legislature that his objections to the Constitution were so deep-rooted that he refused to sign it. But the country approved the work of that convention. The people assembled in the various states, voted their endorsement, and in the end, the prediction of Benjamin

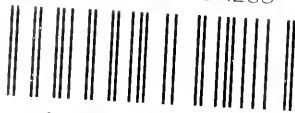
Franklin was fulfilled, the union of states became an established fact, and the painted sun behind the seat of Washington was a rising and not a setting sun.

If we had time, it would be more than interesting to compare the fears and predictions of those who opposed the adoption of the Constitution with the great incidents of subsequent history. In one particular some of the objectants were right. Our constitutional forefathers were weak upon the question of slavery. They left that problem so open that it rankled in the American mind, until Abraham Lincoln was compelled to cut the Gordian knot; but the fears that a president would become a king, the dread that one state would overpower another state, the doubt of the wisdom of a central legislative authority, or of a central administrative power to enforce the laws; the fear that a Supreme Court would become the mere puppet of the appointing power—all these seem to have been dispelled in the course of time and experience.

Differ as we may upon questions, constitutional and legislative, even to this day; no man can deny that we have been blessed with prosperity such as the world has never seen, and an observance of law and order such as are the envy of other countries.

We are the wealthiest nation in the world. We create more wealth each year than any other nation. Our debt as a nation is less than that of each of the great countries and of many of the secondary powers. We cannot contemplate the growth and progress of the United States, now extending its population and busy energy from ocean to ocean and lakes to gulf, without congratulating ourselves that we are citizens of Philadelphia, within whose narrow limits the plan of so great a national government was laid.

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